1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13
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M 101 197

'Kimbundu', Imbangala, &c.). The Esele and the Mbuī, on the north-west, may belong to the Western Province but they have not yet been surely classified.[1]

These neighbouring peoples have been listed only as background for studying the Ovimbundu. Linguistically the Ovimbundu belong to South Africa even as their country geographically is a part of it. 'In respect of climate and vegetation Angola is essentially a borderland and may be regarded as the area of mergence of several distinct zones which attain their fullest development outside the Colony.'[2] Since the Benguela Highland comprises the north-western ridges of the South African sub-continental plateau, it is not surprising that its inhabitants should be the northernmost of the Southern Bantu.[3]

European Administration, Communications, Missions

A 631

As a Portuguese colony, Angola is governed under the Ministry of Colonies in Lisbon by a Governor-General whose residence is Luanda, the capital of the colony since 1576. For administrative purposes the colony is divided into five provinces, each with a governor in charge. These are divided into thirteen districts which in turn are divided into circumscriptions and these again into administrative areas. The country of the Ovimbundu is divided between the provinces of Benguela, Bié, and Huila in the districts of Benguela, Huambo, Cuanza-Sul, Bié, and Huila. 'Direct rule' is the method of administration and native political

A M 631

[1] Ibid.

[2] Walter Fitzgerald, *Africa, a Social, Economic and Political Geography of its Major Regions* (London: Methuen, 1934).

A M 162

[3] The general census of 1940 (*vide supra*, p. 7, note 2) showed the population as follows:

Whites	44,083
Mixed	28,035
Blacks	3,665,829
Others	63
	3,738,010 (op. cit., vol. i, p. 78 f.)

Of the various tribal divisions, the Ovimbundu ('Mbundo') are listed with 1,331,087 (op. cit., vol. ix, p. 23). Owing to the mistaken inclusion of several small tribal groups, this number should probably be reduced by at least 150,000, but on the other hand there are without doubt more Ovimbundu than this last number who have emigrated to neighbouring colonies and to the Union of South Africa.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13
Angola FP1

institutions or divisions have had little consideration in drawing administrative boundaries.

Systems of communications have been developed during the last forty years. The Benguela Railway, built by Sir Robert Williams and the Tanganyika Concessions, Ltd., was completed in 1931 from Lobito to Elisabethville in the Katanga region, where direct connexion is made with the South, Central, and East African systems of rail and water transport. This railway serves as the most direct outlet for the mines of the Congo and Northern Rhodesia. The great majority of native employees of the railway are Ovimbundu and it has also brought this people their first contact with the mines and with industrialized South Africa. Regular steamship connexion between Lobito and Europe includes Portuguese, Belgian, German, and British lines with occasional calls from American, Japanese, and Scandinavian ships.[1] Recent years have seen considerable extensions of telegraphic and radio service throughout the colony. Motor roads have been built extensively, especially on the plateau and along the watersheds. In addition there are many wagon-tracks for ox-wagons which were introduced by the voortrekkers almost seventy years ago. In many cases the routes followed are those first used by native caravans.

There are eleven missionary societies at work among the Ovimbundu: five Protestant and six Roman Catholic.[2] There is only one fully organized Umbundu Church. It includes the work of three Protestant societies. It is the work of this Church and of the Missions of the A.B.C.F.M.[3] and of the United Church of Canada with which the evaluations of this study are concerned. The Mission of the A.B.C.F.M. was founded in 1880, as the first Christian work undertaken among the Ovimbundu.[4]

[1] This was the situation in 1939. During the period of the war the Portuguese services were maintained, although with less regularity than before. The U.S. Maritime Commission maintained a cargo service. There were occasional calls by cargo vessels of various nationalities. The Belgian line is reopening its service (1946) and the Portuguese lines have acquired additional vessels.

[2] Pères du Saint-Esprit began work among the Ovimbundu in 1890; the Padres Seculares have been working in the towns; the Benedictines and several orders of nuns also have stations.

[3] American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

[4] The two missions mentioned conduct their work in most respects as a single mission. The other Protestant societies do not have very extensive work among the Ovimbundu.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

621 592 Going on to the marital status of the villagers, I found that the forty-eight households were to be classified as follows:

Monogynous		27	(including 7 at the school)
Widowers (all formerly monogynous)		3	(„ 1 „)
Widows		7	(„ 4 „)
Young (unmarried) man		1	(at the school)
Polygynous		10	
Total		48	

Whether a similar proportion of monogynous to polygynous households would also be found more widely among the Ovimbundu is a question which could only be settled by extensive 595 demographic studies.[1] My impression is that the proportion of 592 polygynous to monogynous households is higher in the region of Kasonge than in other Umbundu areas for the following reasons:

1. The proximity of Kasonge to the Esele country which has long been a source of supply for concubines (slaves). (Five of the ten polygynous householders in Ngendo included at least one Esele concubine.)
2. The comparatively low bride-price in Kasonge as compared to other areas.

The South African Census for 1921 showed that at that time only one man in eight was polygynous.[2] My impression is that the proportion among the Ovimbundu is no greater and that economic factors will soon do away with any considerable polygyny.

In each of the ten polygynous households in Ngendo save one, there were only two wives or concubines. The one exception was

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[1] The census of 1940 gives more reliable figures and more details than were previously available, but it does not provide a basis for studies of this order. The number or proportion of polygamous unions among the 'uncivilized population' was not recorded. For the whole colony, the division of the native population by sex is given as follows: males, 1,733,328, females, 1,932,501 (op. cit., vol. i, p. 78 f.); and for the Ovimbundu (*Mbundo*), as follows: males, 636,583, females, 694,504 (op. cit., vol. ix, p. 22 f.). Owing to the migration of labourers, and especially to the system known as 'contract labour', certain areas (of recruitment) show a large excess of females over males (as much as 4 to 1 in the 20–29 age-groups of certain areas), while certain (receiving) areas show a corresponding excess of males over females (4 to 1 in several areas and even 22 to 1 in one area, for the same age-groups) (op. cit., vol. iii, *passim*). On this subject, *vide* R. R. Kuczynski, *Colonial Population* (London, 1937), and *Population Movements* (ibid., 1936); both summarized in the *Rhodes-Livingstone Journal*, no. 2.

[2] Quoted by P. A. W. Cook, *The Education of a South African Tribe* (Cape Town; Juta, 1934), p. 3.

161 But this number is probably made up by Ovimbundu emigrants to other colonies and to the Union of South Africa.(1)

162 There are no recent estimates of the populations of the various groups of Ovimbundu. Magyar in 1859 however gave figures which are of some interest.(2) He estimated the total Ovimbundu ("Kimbanda") population at 1,880,000, but points out that this number includes 300,000 from tribes which, though culturally resembling the Ovimbundu, are not linguistically related to them (Kissama, Mupinda, Mussumbe, Lusseke, Munyemba and Massongo). Another 300,000 are from tribes which Magyar includes as "Kimbanda" speaking, but which are not generally reckoned as Ovimbundu today. (Nganda, Esele, Humbi, Lupolo, Hako and Kakingi.) This would leave 1,280,000, a figure remarkably near to the present estimate. The following are his figures for the separate groups:-

	Area in sq.m.	Population
Viye (Bie)	800	120,000
Bailundu	2,000	450,000
Wambu (Hambo)	?	120,000
Ciyaka (Kiaka)	?	75,000
Ngalangi (Galangue)	1,000	250,000
Civula (Kibala)	200	35,000
Ndulu (Andulo)	160	40,000
Sambu (Sambos)	120	30,000
Kakonda (Cacanda)	300	100,000
	Total	1,220,000

There are no recent estimates of tribal density. The 1940 Census(3) gives density in the Provinces as :-

Bie Province(4)	1.5 per sq. km.
Benguella	8.5 per sq. km.
Huila	2.0 per sq. km.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT(5)

TOPOGRAPHY

133 The homeland of the Ovimbundu corresponds closely with the highest part of the Benguella Highland, i.e. the area lying between 11° and 15° South Latitude, and meridians 14° and 18° E. Altitude in this region is everywhere over 4,000 feet, and the western ridges rise as high as 9,000 feet, forming the highest north-western portion of the ancient South African sub-continental plateau. To the east, elevation drops gradually from the Kwanza valley towards the Kasai and Zambesi rivers. To the west, descent is irregular - in places almost precipitous - to the coastal plain. This plain and the stretch of higher country (below 3,200 feet) which separates it from the Highland proper, form an arid and sparsely-populated region which is a northerly extension of the Kalahari, Namieb and Omaheke deserts.

(1) Childs, op.cit., p.9. (2) Magyar, 1859, pp.125, 239, 361 etc.
(3) Quoted by Sarmento, 1948.
(4) This figure is of little significance since Bie Province includes large sparsely-inhabited non-Ovimbundu areas in south-east Angola.
(5) Childs 1949, chap.I. Fitzgerald 1948, pp.278f. Hambly 1934, pp.108f.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

growth is under examination. This central plateau, the Benguela Highlands, rises in places to a height of 6,000 feet, an altitude which reduces the heat of the tropics and so modifies the flora, discouraging some types of vegetation and encouraging others. Hostility of the highlands to palm trees and the banana is appropriately discussed when dealing with cultural losses; while the fostering effect of reduced temperature and the presence of wide expanses of open country on the growth of maize and the keeping of cattle is a cultural gain.

The prevailing rains of Angola are from the northeast to the southwest; consequently the high plateau intercepts rain clouds which give an annual fall of sixty inches. This adequate rainfall is another factor which has affected economic life, density of population, communal welfare, and powers of expansion.

The villages of the Ovimbundu are built on hillsides having a commanding view of the surrounding country. There is in the nature of the land a natural protection from enemies. In addition to this the Benguela Highlands are an admirable base from which expeditions both predatory and commercial might, and actually did set out eastward to the interior of Africa, and southwest to the cattle-keeping country.

It is important to note that this central plateau is the watershed for four large river systems; the Kwanza to the northwest; the Cunene to the southwest; the tributaries of the Kasai to the northeast; and the Zambezi and its affluents to the southeast. Fishing, with attendant beliefs of a ritualistic kind, is of local importance; so also is the making of canoes. Moreover, the river valleys have marked out a natural means of communication in several directions.

In connection with the river system the biological factor of the tsetse fly is important, because the presence of the fly locally discourages human habitation and prevents the keeping of cattle. The exact distribution of the fly is imperfectly known, but *Glossinia palpalis*, the cause of sleeping sickness in human beings, also *Glossinia morsitans*, which carries disease to cattle, are both present along the Kwanza and parts of the other rivers (J. C. B. Statham, Through Angola, p. 294).

The western coastal strip is a region of great aridity which has in some years no rainfall whatever, because the northeasterly rains have expended themselves on the high plateau. This region displays vegetation of the semi-desert type; namely, baobab trees, prickly acacias, euphorbias, and aloes. Population in this area is sparse, always nomadic, and in some places non-existent. The coastal strip

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

could be observed. Eventually I decided to work in the Bimbe area, in the extreme north-western corner of Umbundu country. The census[10] indicated that Bimbe had a smaller white population than any comparable area of Umbundu country, and people who knew it considered that it was one of the areas most likely to retain a relatively conservative social life.

In Bimbe I settled in the village of Epalanga in the chiefdom of Gumba. The advantage of Gumba lay in the conservatism for which its people were noted in other chiefdoms; its disadvantage lay in its proximity to the northern boundary of Umbundu speech and culture, which led me to collect some items of ethnographic information not typical of Umbundu country.[11] On the whole, I am satisfied that the people of Gumba were in the past as in the present Ovimbundu in both speech and way of life.[12]

Many of my discoveries were at first negative ones. I could not find any evidence that there was a double system of kinship groups actually in existence; the villages were not composed of agnatic kin; the chief seemed lacking in power. Nor was it easy to obtain detailed information about the past even from old men. There is little interest nowadays in history, nor are the old social institutions regarded, even by those who once participated in them, as being necessarily better than those of the present day. The reason for this attitude seems to lie in Umbundu social psychology with its readiness to accept European authority and values. Interesting as the motivations behind this attitude are, this 'cultural amnesia' caused me much disappointment. I found it much easier to get texts on the caravan trade, and on ceremonial practices and proverbs, than on the political and kinship systems. The inadequacies of the information I received on the political system may be explained by the fact that Gumba is on the fringe of the area tributary to the old kingdom of

[10] Of 1950.

[11] The payment of fines by a man to his dead wife's kin had been formerly practised in Gumba, and still is further north. It does not seem to have been known in living memory elsewhere in Umbundu country.

[12] The northern limit of Umbundu speech is now somewhere to the north of the administrative post of Cela. As there has not been substantial migration from the south, it is reasonable to assume that it is many years since the Gumba–Cela boundary was also the language boundary.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

[1874-1911]

THE OVIMBUNDU UNDER TWO SOVEREIGNTIES

178 The great distinguishing mark of the Ovimbundu was their participation in the caravan trade. Some of the neighbouring people also engaged in trading journeys (e.g. the Chokwe) but in central Angola the dominant traders were the Ovimbundu by reason of their control of the routes to Benguela and Catumbela, a control which as Livingstone's narrative shows they tried for a while to turn into a monopoly.[43] With this must be linked 177 the greater readiness of the Ovimbundu to adopt European ways, marked by the general adoption of cloths for wear by at latest the mid-nineteenth century.[44]

3. *Economics and Social Structure*

101 This section will describe the economic life and social structure which marked the period of the rubber trade (1874–1911). 436 A genuine currency existed in the form of cloth, and fortunes 439 could be made in it. Serpa Pinto tells us of one Otjimbundu who made £3,500 by trading in the interior and that he had met many men who 'turned over capital of a thousand to twelve hundred pounds sterling',[45] presumably in trade goods since Portuguese currency did not circulate among the Ovim- 361 bundu. At the capitals of the kingdoms genuine towns grew up. Magyar in the middle of the nineteenth century estimated that ● [162] 5,000 people lived at Bailundo[46] and the British explorer Cameron who had crossed Africa from Zanzibar says of Ekovongo, the capital of Bie, 'the town of Kagnombe, the largest I came across during my whole journey, being more than three miles in circumference. On arrival I was met by the 644 Kagnombe's secretary, chamberlain, and captain of the guard who wore red waistcoats as a sign of their dignity. The secretary was more ornamental than useful, being unable to write, but a subordinate, a black man and native of Dondo, was better educated and conducted the trade of Kagnombe with the coast'.[47]

[43] Ibid., p. 205.
[44] Ibid., p. 206, referring to Magyar as evidence.
[45] Serpa Pinto, pp. 161–2.
[46] Magyar, p. 391.
[47] V. L. Cameron, *Across Africa*, London, 1877. Vol. II, pp. 206–7.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

[1874-1911]

rather than any political alliance or opposition, which related the Ovimbundu as a whole to the Portuguese and the other tribes. Informants who remember 'the time of the rubber' talk about it with much more interest and much more detail than about any other aspect of the past, and it is far easier to make an ordered picture out of the narratives of the caravan journeys than to fill in the gaps in the descriptions of the political and kinship systems provided by Childs and Hastings.[57]

Politically the Ovimbundu were divided, as has been said, into several kingdoms. Bailundo, the largest of the kingdoms was divided, according to Childs into about 200 sub-chiefdoms. As it had about half a million inhabitants this would give an average population of about 2,500. While the kingdoms seem to have been more or less stable in number and boundaries from the end of the eighteenth century, the number of sub-chiefdoms seems to have increased. Thus an official Portuguese estimate made in 1799 gives Bailundo as having only 82 sub-chiefdoms, and Galangue, where Childs counted 112 sub-chiefdoms, as having 78. The sub-chiefdom paid tribute to the king, sent men for his armies, and recognized his court as the supreme arbitrator. Some sub-chiefdoms were held by ministers or relatives of the king.[58]

It is, however, not easy on the sparse detail available to decide how much autonomy the sub-chiefdoms really had. Gumba, the area where I worked, was a sub-chiefdom of the Bailundo kingdom, albeit on the north-western frontier, neighbouring Cassongue and Cela, where the people did not call themselves Va-Mbailundu, though their rulers acknowledged the suzerainty of the king of Bailundo. Old men told me of raids from Bailundo for slaves, but I cannot say if this was the result of the period of disorder mentioned, or whether sub-chiefdoms on the border of a kingdom gave only nominal submission and received only nominal protection. In the area where I worked,

[57] This is not intended as a personal reflection on Dr. Childs and the late Dr. Hastings, both of whom deserve the highest praise for their work and for their obvious devotion to the Ovimbundu. Hastings devoted far more space to the magico-religious field than to the kinship system. Likewise Childs's description of kinship is much shorter, much less detailed, and much less satisfactory than his account of childhood and adolescence, or the really outstanding historical chapter.

[58] Magyar, pp. 385–92; Childs, pp. 23–24.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu
Angola FP1

THE CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Men can go out to work in three ways. By going to look for work in a city or on a plantation, by being recruited in his village by a travelling labour recruiter (*angariador*), or by being recruited through the post for military service or for contract labour (a period of a year's non-voluntary work).

Men who are away at work may keep in touch with their kin by letters. These are sent to the nearest Catholic or Protestant mission station according to the religious sympathies of the sender and his kin and are sent from there to the villages.

Angola forms an Overseas Province of Portugal, and is therefore subject to the Overseas Ministry in Lisbon. The Overseas Provinces of Portugal are officially declared to be integral parts of Portugal, which is regarded as a nation existing in Europe, Africa, and Asia. The expression 'Here also is Portugal' is often heard in Angola.

The inhabitants of Angola are in legal status divided into 'civilized' persons, whether white, mulatto, or black, with Portuguese citizenship, and Portuguese 'natives' or 'uncivilized' persons,[1] this latter category including some 3,000 'uncivilized' mulattoes. The 1950 census gave Angola a total population of 4,145,266 of whom 135,355 were 'civilized'. This category was composed of 78,826 whites, 26,335 mulattoes, and 30,089 Africans, plus a balance of 105 presumably Goans.

The 'natives' are, unlike the 'civilized', subject to the Labour Code. There is no Native Legal Code, nor does Portuguese law apply to 'natives'. Administrative officers may apply Portuguese law, or native custom as known to them, or their own judgement.

The administration is headed by the Governor-General who resides at Luanda. The province of Angola is divided into districts each headed by a district governor. Both the governors-general and the district governors have usually distinguished themselves in the Services or in a legal career. Members of the administrative service are not usually promoted to these posts, although they may attain such positions as that of Secretary of Native Affairs.

The districts are in turn sub-divided into *concelhos* (a term

[1] By a law of 1961 Portuguese citizenship has been made universal.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

bought in the towns, and men returning from South Africa are said to bring all sorts of goods including typewriters. The traders do not lend money though they sometimes give credit. The living standards of the traders are often low, some being unable to buy a truck, and having therefore to come to terms with someone who has one. I have even heard of traders having to eat the staple Umbundu mush (*pirão* in Portuguese).

While the traders play an extremely important role in the local economy they do not establish any permanent face-to-face relationship with the natives outside their household and store, because they are not interested in them and have no reason to be. This does not apply in the same way to African *assimilados*, actual or self-styled, of whom there were a few in the neighbourhood, who lived more or less in Portuguese style. Of these one in particular, Justino, made a hobby of settling disputes, and will therefore re-appear later on. Their main source of revenue was coffee-growing, and they would occasionally have local labour working for them. As they tend to identify themselves with the 'civilized' population, their attitude to the natives is not unlike that of the traders, but culturally and linguistically they are linked to the Ovimbundu villagers, and if of local origin will have kinship links too.

This group is significant because it is in the total social structure of Angola a link between the 'civilized' and 'non-civilized' communities. Both the *assimilados* and those pseudo-*assimilados* who have persuaded the natives that they are *assimilados*, identify themselves with the whites but are also linked much more closely with the natives than any other group. As the division into 'civilized' and 'non-civilized' is legally sanctioned on the grounds of culture not race, a group which participates to some degree in the cultures of both sections must be of great significance in the study of the means by which the whole society is integrated. In the neighbourhood where I worked this group of Europeanized Africans were few in numbers,[80] both absolutely and in relation to other parts of Angola.

[80] I only know of one genuine *assimilado* in the neighbourhood though there were others who claimed to be such. Galvão and Selvagem (p. 408) remark of the Cazengo concelho of northern Angola, 'The great number of civilized negroes, some planters incorporated in the European economic system, hastened the disintegration and confusion of the tribal institutions.'

[assimilados are Africans possessing Portuguese citizenship -- Analyst]